United Nations

Report of the Committee on Information

General Assembly

Official Records • Fiftieth Session
Supplement No.21 (A/50/21)

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United Nations • New York, 1995

NOTE

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ISSN 0255-190X

[Original: English]

[7 August 1995]

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly;"

and requested the Committee and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved its report and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group, 1/ reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. At its organizational session in 1980, the Committee agreed that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to forty-eighth sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee, approved its reports 2/and its recommendations, and reaffirmed the mandate given to it in resolution 34/182 (resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A,

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21, (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/40/21); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/43/21); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/44/21); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/45/21); ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/46/21); ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/47/21); ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/48/21).

41/68 A, 42/162, 43/60, 44/50, 45/76, 46/73 B, 47/73 B and 48/44 B). At its forty-ninth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee 3/ and adopted its consensus recommendations (resolutions 49/38 A and B). The Assembly also requested the Committee to report to it at its fiftieth session.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico; at its forty-first session the Assembly appointed Malta a member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, it appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe; and at its forty-fourth session it appointed Nepal.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 members, and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay members of the Committee. The Assembly also decided to appoint the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic a member of the Committee, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 members and appointed Burkina Faso a member of the Committee.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 79 to 81 members and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal members of the Committee.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 81 to 83 members and appointed Gabon and Israel members of the Committee.

9. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 83 to 88 members and appointed Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakstan and South Africa members of the Committee.

10. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakstan

3/ Ibid., Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/49/21).

Kenya
Lebanon
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zimbabwe

II. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Opening of the session

11. The organizational meeting of the seventeenth session of the Committee was held at United Nations Headquarters on 1 May 1995. In the absence of the outgoing Chairman, the session was opened by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Bureau was elected, with the exception of the Rapporteur, whose election was deferred until the second meeting. The Chairman and the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made statements (see annexes I and II).

B. Election of officers

12. In accordance with the principle of geographic rotation, the Committee elected the following officers for the period 1995-1996:

Chairman: Mr. Ivan V. Maximov (Bulgaria)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Alejandro H. Nieto (Argentina)
Mr. Minhaj Barna (Pakistan)
Mr. José Alberto de Sousa (Portugal)

Rapporteur: Mr. Fateh Zeghib (Algeria)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

13. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted, without objection, the following agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/1995/1):

1. Opening of the session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.

4. Statement by the Chairman.

5. Statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information.

6. General debate and consideration of substantive questions:

   (a) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, and of the need to establish the new international economic order and the new world information and communication order;

   (b) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;

(c) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

7. Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

14. The Committee held the substantive meetings of its seventeenth session at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 12 May 1995.

15. For its consideration of agenda item 6, the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the allocation of resources from the regular budget of the United Nations to United Nations information centres in 1994 (A/AC.198/1995/2) and on the review of publications by the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/1995/3).

D. Observers

16. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Georgia, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Panama, Suriname and Sweden. The representatives of the Holy See and Switzerland also participated as observers.

17. Representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Correspondents' Association (UNCA) and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) also attended.

E. Other matters

18. The Committee decided to conduct further informal consultations through the Bureau, the spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China.

19. The Chairman informed the Committee that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had requested to become a member of the Committee.

20. In response to General Assembly resolution 49/233 B of 31 March 1995, the Extended Bureau brought to the attention of the Committee a paper containing a review of the Secretariat's policy on dissemination of information related to peace-keeping (see annex III). The Committee took note of this review and will examine it further after its seventeenth session through its Extended Bureau.

III. GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

21. Statements during the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee: Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Czech Republic, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ethiopia, France (on behalf of the European Union and the associated States from Central and Eastern Europe), Guinea, Israel, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines (on behalf of the Group of 77), Russian Federation, South Africa, Syrian Arab Republic, Netherlands (on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States), Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen. Statements were also made by the observers for Haiti, Kyrgyzstan and Panama. At the invitation of the Committee, the representatives of UNESCO and UNCA also addressed the Committee.

22. In addressing the substantive issues before the Committee, all speakers acknowledged the dynamic power of information in bringing the message of the United Nations - peace, democracy and development - to the world audience. In addition, they expressed their belief that communication was an important tool that could help all peoples attain their political, socio-economic and cultural objectives, unite them in awareness and aspiration, and shape the world of tomorrow. Information was both the mirror of today's realities and a powerful catalyst for change and development.

23. Most speakers expressed the view that the spirit of consensus, which had been sustained and consolidated in past years in the Committee, had been essential in allowing it to be a meaningful force for positive change and effectiveness in the public information policies of the United Nations. In the opinion of one speaker, who also spoke on behalf of a number of others, the active role of the Extended Bureau had improved the working relationship between the members of the Committee and the Department of Public Information and had contributed to transparency in the information process. This interaction, in the opinion of most speakers, had increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department over the last year and a half, and they were convinced that with the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information this partnership would continue and be further strengthened in the future.

24. All speakers pointed to the importance of commemorating World Press Freedom Day, 3 May, and solemnly recalled and remembered the unprecedented numbers of journalists who had been killed in the exercise of their profession in the previous year, as well as those who were detained in jails. A tribute was paid to the Algerian journalists who were the victims of fundamentalist terrorists. Another delegation reiterated the possibility of the creation of a legal instrument to protect journalists, especially those covering situations of social and military tension. It proposed that as a first step there should be legal protection through a special accreditation to the United Nations of those journalists who covered peace-keeping operations, which would allow them to pass freely and would help provide them with assistance and protection. All delegations reiterated that freedom of information was the touchstone of all the basic human freedoms, to be protected at all costs, and that, accordingly, the world press must be safeguarded from harassment and harm. Several delegations remarked that the theme of World Press Freedom Day in 1995, "the press for peace and tolerance", was in consonance with the declaration by the General Assembly of 1995 as the United Nations Year for Tolerance. One speaker said that the Secretary-General had stated that the international media had an important role to play in promoting tolerance by bringing to light abuses against marginalized groups throughout the world. While many agreed that a free press was

indispensable for promoting democracy and human rights, others, however, pointed out that it must be accompanied by responsibility and respect for cultural integrity and diversity.

25. A number of speakers commented on the professional cooperation between UNESCO and the Department of Public Information in organizing the regional seminars to promote pluralistic and varied media, held at Windhoek in 1991, Almaty in 1992 and Santiago in May 1994. Several speakers characterized those seminars as "turning-points" in the international debate on communications, and many looked forward to the seminar planned for the Arab region at Sana'a in January 1996. One speaker suggested that such seminars be held annually.

26. Many speakers stressed the need for promoting the establishment of a new, more just, balanced and more effective world information and communication order, intended to strengthen peace and international understanding. They also emphasized the need for the transfer of technology from the developed to the developing countries, and removal of disparities and imbalances between them. A number of speakers stated their belief that all countries should have access to the flow of world information in a balanced and equitable order. Several speakers said that, in the communications field today, news about the rich and prosperous abounded, while the poor and disadvantaged were ignored in their misery. As one representative said, news from the developing world was often sensational. He praised the journalists who helped to rectify this unfortunate situation and protect against the destructive effects of press clichés, which were potentially harmful to some societies. Several speakers agreed that objectivity was a goal in the covering of international issues by the so-called "free" media, so that half-truths and innuendo would not be given credibility and stereotypes not accepted as unchallenged realities. It was important in the view of a number of speakers that technology be transferred from the developed to the developing countries in the field of information and communication, thus creating a partnership, with the common objective of sharing professional expertise and setting up a two-way information flow. Several speakers made the point that electronically transmitting United Nations materials had little impact when the infrastructures required to access the information were lacking. They stressed the importance of creating information and communication infrastructures in developing countries to help them truly become part of the "global village". In this connection speakers extended their support to the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication.

27. One delegation spoke out against the worsening violation of his country's sovereignty, alleging that radio and television broadcasts from another Member State were being transmitted to his country in violation of international standards.

28. All speakers expressed their strong and continuing support for the work and activities of the Department of Public Information, and their appreciation for the Assistant Secretary-General's introductory speech and the reports of the Secretary-General before the Committee. The majority of speakers highlighted the innovative approaches of the Department, the strengthening of professionalism within its ranks and the pioneering role it had played within the Secretariat in the electronic dissemination of information. Many commended the Department for the new spirit of partnership, cooperation and transparency evidenced under the Assistant Secretary-General's leadership, which had resulted in strengthened outreach towards Member States and diverse media and to educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. One delegation said that in less than two years the Assistant Secretary-General had restored a climate of confidence in the Department, which was greatly appreciated. While

recognizing the complexity of the Department's task as a focal point of the information activities of the Organization, one representative on behalf of a number of others welcomed the fact that the Department had operated during the past year more than ever before as an integral part of a well-defined United Nations information strategy. One speaker said that the endeavours and achievements of the United Nations in social development, peace-keeping, self-determination and human rights would go unnoticed and unfulfilled without the excellent work of the Department.

29. Another speaker characterized the management of the Department as dynamic and action-oriented. It was agreed that the Department had a particularly important role to play in responding to the heightened public interest in the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization. In its work it was, therefore, more than ever necessary to project a unified and positive image of the Organization and to disseminate its success stories as widely as possible. Several speakers said that they thought the "UN Minute" video segments covering the history of the Organization were especially noteworthy in this regard. One speaker said that the Department should intensify its efforts to commemorate the historic San Francisco meeting, which marked the end of a brutal war, the defeat of fascism and the beginning of an era of peace. One speaker informed the Committee about her Government's contribution to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations by proposing the observance of "A World Week of Peace" to begin on 24 October 1995 with the purpose to achieve a universal cease-fire or truce. A proposal to that effect would be forwarded to the General Assembly for adoption during its forty-ninth regular session. Many delegations stressed the view that it was imperative for the Department to continue to restructure and redirect its resources in response to changing information priorities. It was acknowledged by many that that was being done, although some believed that more could always be done. On the other hand, another speaker, who also represented a large group, said that in the pursuit of cost-effectiveness, the wishes of the majority of Member States should not be forgotten. The Department should receive the necessary budget allocations for the performance of its tasks. Several others echoed that sentiment, one delegation maintaining, for example, that if a particular publication were to be needed, it should be produced regardless of cost, so that the goals and the objectives of the United Nations would not be disregarded.

30. Another speaker suggested that the Department must lead in the global struggle to ensure that information and information technology was the servant and not the master. He hoped that the Department would give some guidance to the branches of the United Nations family, ensuring that they did not abuse the easy electronic access now existing and that audiences were not drowned in a sea of paper or electronic signals. One speaker, speaking also on behalf of a large group, reiterated his group's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the attention he had given to information work within the system.

31. One representative suggested that the Department, on behalf of the Organization, must not be afraid to stride along bold, new information paths and even reiterated his delegation's suggestion, made during the previous session of the General Assembly, that the Secretary-General might consider appearing on popular talk-shows and teaching new constituencies about the Organization. Several speakers emphasized the importance of the Department's getting the United Nations message out to young people and in that connection stressed the importance of a partnership with universities and other educational institutions. That teaching role of the Department was expanded upon by one representative who strongly believed in the importance of peace education and suggested that media programmes could be developed for that purpose. For

example, he mentioned the possibility of a peace education programme, which the Department should promote, involving the creation of a concept of human values that went beyond specific identities, and the recognition, appreciation and respect for diversity on the one hand and the realization of common human origin and values on the other. The subject of the Department's training of journalists, who could help to impart peace education and counteract media propagating hatred and xenophobia, was also raised.

32. Most speakers praised the Department's multi-media expansion into information dissemination and outreach on the Internet and other electronic networks. They characterized that new direction as perhaps the most dynamic area of information activity undertaken by the Department in recent years, which had greatly increased its outreach and advocacy to vast potential audiences worldwide. Representatives pointed out concrete and positive results of the Department's upgrading and use of more sophisticated informational capabilities, citing specifically their improved access to the materials in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library through electronic networks, as well as to United Nations news and activities by telephone via the United Nations News Electronic Bulletin Board. In supporting the policy of increasing the United Nations presence on the "information superhighway", one speaker on behalf of a number of others said that the necessary funds should be made available to the Department to allow it to keep pace with modern information techniques, if necessary by budgetary reallocation, particularly in the areas of radio and television. Others agreed that additional expenditures would prove to be worthwhile outlays for effective communication to the outside world.

33. Reiterating the integral relationship between peace and development, a number of speakers pointed to the Secretary-General's supplement to his Agenda for Peace and his Agenda for Development as important information priorities of the Organization. Several speakers suggested that the departmental resources freed by the discontinuation of the anti-apartheid information activities could be reallocated to economic and social development and democracy in Africa in general and in southern Africa in particular. Some delegations expressed strong support for a World Week for Peace and urged delegations to join in sponsoring a proposal which was being submitted to that effect. On the other hand, a number of delegations noted that, while the United Nations had been called to play an increased role in the field of international peace and security, it was equally important that the Department be an advocate for sustainable development activities of the Organization. One speaker said that it must step up its efforts in that regard.

34. All speakers stressed the important role that the information programmes and activities of the Department could play in contributing to the success of the many peace-keeping missions of the Organization. They pointed out that a timely and integrated information campaign could be helpful in forming a positive climate of world opinion, both in the troop-contributing countries and in the countries where the missions were deployed, and that more funds should be allocated for this purpose. Accordingly, many speakers representing all groups of Member States favoured the idea of the Department's increased involvement in support for United Nations peace-keeping and other political missions, which entailed introducing an information component into each mission at the very earliest planning stages, so that the Department would be included in early planning missions. In this connection, it was important that the Department and the relevant departments, in particular the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, further enhance their cooperation and coordination. One speaker, representing a troop-contributing country of long standing, asked that

the Department be given a greater role in devising information campaigns for those missions, which would impart to the public in those countries a clearer picture of what the United Nations could and could not do in a given operation. Another representative said that, in his view, because peace-keeping operations did not always bring with them immediate political solutions, it was imperative that the public be made aware of the exact mandate of each mission to avoid unnecessary confusion.

35. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, and a number of other speakers stressed the particular benefits to be gained from the use of United Nations radio, which could have an immense influence on the effectiveness of United Nations operations and serve as an important confidence-building measure. Another representative said that his group could not understand how the use of radio by the United Nations could be perceived as a threat by some countries and called, therefore, on Governments to provide every assistance in those instances where a radio broadcasting system was being installed by a peace-keeping operation. Such a capacity, in the opinion of one speaker, was needed to strengthen both peace-keeping operations and humanitarian activities.

36. Two delegations specifically requested that the Department, as stated in General Assembly resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983, initiate specific broadcasts in French and in Creole for the Caribbean region, which they thought would be especially beneficial to local populations to help clarify the aims of the United Nations Mission in Haiti. One delegation commended the Department in general for the efficiency, productivity and excellence of the Caribbean Radio Unit during yet another year. On the general subject of the advantages of radio broadcasting, one speaker alluded to its importance to millions of people all over the world and requested that more frequencies and time be allotted to radio programmes in some of the regional languages of his country, such as Urdu.

37. All speakers were supportive of the Organization's cycle of international conferences on economic and social issues and greatly appreciated the Department's commendable role in bringing the messages of those conferences to the forefront of the international agenda. In that connection, one representative said that the press kits were of particular value. The work related to the World Summit for Social Development was singled out by a number of delegations as an outstanding example of the Department's recent successful information campaigns. One speaker, noting that 2,900 journalists had been accredited to the Summit, said that the media coverage for that conference had been the most substantial of any of the Organization's economic and social activities, demonstrating that the United Nations was indeed a major contributor in the field of information on sustainable and human development. Many delegations also expressed appreciation for the preparatory work being done for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held at Beijing in September 1995, and one representative said that his country's positive cooperation with the Department in that connection would surely contribute to the success of the Conference. It was important, in the view of one speaker, that the Department continue to evaluate the content of its information campaigns, by studying exactly what was published and with what goal in mind. One delegation praised the Department's publications programme on sustainable development issues.

38. Several representatives expressed the view that support for the peace process in the Middle East and assistance to the Palestinian people continued to be one of the priorities of the United Nations and supported the Department's ongoing information activities in that area. One speaker suggested that fact-finding missions for the press must be sponsored to that region. Several

also pointed specifically to the Department's seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development, held at Madrid earlier in the year. Several speakers paid tribute to the tireless work of the Department in bringing to an end the apartheid regime in South Africa.

39. Several delegations made reference to the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster in 1996 and asked that the Department develop and implement a programme of activities to commemorate that tragic event. One delegation expressed its appreciation for the Assistant Secretary-General's initiative of appointing a special coordinator for dissemination of information for the tenth anniversary of the disaster.

40. One delegation welcomed the fact that the Publications Board had succeeded in revitalizing the publications programme of the Department. Many speakers referred positively to the Department's publications, which they believed were helping to create a positive image of the Organization, and stressed the criteria that they should be cost-effective, timely and issued in response to real needs. Several pointed to the usefulness of the Department's new publication, Development Update. Several delegations urged the need for early resumption of the publication Development Forum. Another delegation pointed to the value of Development Business and other publications on economic and social issues being widely distributed to libraries around the world. Another speaker congratulated the staff of Africa Recovery for a publication of high editorial and production standards. One speaker referred to that publication and other recurrent publications, UN Chronicle and the Yearbook of the United Nations, and suggested the release of major recurrent publications also in French. Some speakers asked that more Department materials be published in Russian, which was important not only for the Russian Federation but also for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

41. Many delegations praised the recently launched Blue Book series as a valuable resource for an important constituency of scholars, researchers and journalists, and one speaker characterized them as "must-have" books for everyone interested in a serious evaluation of United Nations activities. In that connection, the same representative wished to encourage the Department to take advantage of the demand for such research materials and to promote sales in order to increase revenues for the United Nations. As to the timing and choice of subject-matter in the series, he suggested that the issues to be covered would be those on which the United Nations had recently concluded a major stage of its involvement and on which the community of students of the United Nations was only about to begin undertaking a review.

42. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, welcomed the improvement in quality and speed of issue of the press releases in both working languages. One speaker said that he would like very much to have press releases in Spanish, but realized there were budgetary considerations on that proposal.

43. On the subject of media relations, several speakers paid tribute to the Spokesman's Office for the important contributions that it made on a daily basis. The observer for UNCA said that relations between his group and the senior officers of the Department had improved considerably and that the latter had gone out of their way, within the limits allowed, to be approachable and to discuss problems. While differences remained, serious efforts were being made to resolve them. He further asked for practical steps to this end, including regular meetings with the representatives of UNCA, improved access and transparency, increased availability to the press of the United Nations electronic database of documents, increased representation of the press at

Headquarters, and improved accommodations for correspondents. Some speakers expressed the view that the participation of UNCA as an observer at the session of the Committee was important.

44. One delegation, on behalf of a number of others, urged the Department to devote special attention to the requirements of UNCA. Some delegations supported the request of UNCA for access for its accredited members to all conference rooms, including the General Assembly Hall and the Security Council Chamber, for first-hand coverage of their open meetings. They felt the gesture would have the desired effect of strengthening the transparency of the United Nations system. One representative expressed concern, however, at inappropriate remarks made by the observer for UNCA, which constituted, in his opinion, interference in the internal affairs of a Member State.

45. All speakers welcomed the strengthening of the role of United Nations information centres by the Department, which was greatly enhancing the information activities of the United Nations throughout the world and was contributing to a positive image of the Organization. They emphasized the importance of information centres as focal points for two-way communications between the United Nations and its Member States. One speaker believed that this was particularly important in relation to the newly independent States and those in transition. Several speakers noted that the information centres were performing an essential and useful role, particularly in the developing countries where, because of inadequate resources, the media had more limited access to information. One representative commented that, during the past year, the network of centres had facilitated access to regional responses to the Organization's activities, in particular to the World Summit for Social Development and the International Conference on Population and Development. He noted also that booklets and background papers had been produced in several local languages, including Bahasa Indonesia.

46. Many delegations expressed support for the policy of integration, on a case-by-case basis, where appropriate, in consultation with the host Government and provided the functional autonomy of the information component was preserved. One speaker noted that this process had not affected the level of efficiency under which the integrated information centres operated. Another speaker, on behalf of others, said that his group was pleased with the way the integration of United Nations information centres in certain countries had been carried out. Another speaker, however, said that, while the decision to integrate some centres might have had virtue, it could also possibly create new problems in regard to the functioning of those centres as effective and independent institutions. One speaker said that prior consultations with the host Governments and also with the Committee on Information must be held in the implementation of this exercise.

47. One speaker expressed interest in establishing an information component within the office of the United Nations Development Programme at Sofia and was sympathetic with other countries having similar aspirations. Another speaker expressed hope for the continued active role of the United Nations information centre in Moscow, under the new Director, especially with regard to the dissemination of information in Russian. Another representative said that his delegation was still looking forward to the nomination of a Director for the United Nations information centre at Beirut. His Government would spare no effort in cooperating with the Department to enhance the role of the centre, in order to restore its importance in the country and the region. According to one delegation, the United Nations information centre at Dhaka had been without a Director for the last few years, and it asked the Department to nominate one as

soon as possible. Another speaker expressed his country's appreciation for the appointment of a professional information officer to the United Nations information centre at Tehran and the reactivation of that centre. Another speaker looked forward to the early addition of an information component within the United Nations office in his country, which was one of the youngest democracies of the international community. One speaker reiterated his delegation's request for a United Nations information centre at Port-au-Prince, and another repeated the request for a centre at Conakry. One speaker asked for the Department to re-establish the post of Director of the centre in his country as a contribution in the field of preventive diplomacy.

48. One speaker said that the University for Peace in her country was successfully disseminating information on the work of the United Nations, and another said that the Department, in collaboration with the University, should publicize information that enhanced positive developments in the area of peace. One representative, stressing the importance and pivotal role of United Nations information centres, said it was alarming that since the early 1990s there had been a steady decline in host countries' contributions for centres, and it was important to reverse this trend. An agreement was being finalized between his country and the Department which would cover the legal basis upon which the United Nations centre in his capital operated and would create more favourable conditions for its multifaceted activities, which his Government intended to support financially. Several speakers urged the Department to continue to make all the necessary efforts to address the question of the imbalances in the allocation of funds to the United Nations information centres. One speaker said that he hoped that the Department would continue to make genuine efforts to bring some sort of defensible balance in the extent of resources and facilities it provided to its regional centres throughout the world.

49. Several speakers commented on the importance of the Department's outreach to non-governmental organizations, highlighting the importance of the annual Department of Public Information/non-governmental organization conference. One speaker suggested that it be complemented by regional conferences. Another speaker emphasized the great public information potential of the network of United Nations depository libraries. He noted that his Government had cooperated with the Department the previous year on a project which involved a professional librarian from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library visiting the 13 depositories in his country to inspect the status of their current operation. One major observation which resulted was that the local library staffs needed greater guidance and training from Headquarters librarians to make more effective use of United Nations materials, which were often highly specialized documents. He hoped that the conclusions reached in the project would prove useful to other depository libraries around the world. In that connection he believed that the host countries could greatly assist, and he called upon other Member States with depositories to consider ways in which to make better use of that valuable resource in bringing United Nations activities to the attention of the broader public.

50. The guided tours were of particular interest and concern to a number of delegations in the debate. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, emphasized that visitors to the United Nations should not be prohibited from access to the Security Council Chamber or General Assembly Hall simply on the grounds that meetings were taking place. Several speakers maintained that guided tours should be presented in the widest possible range of languages, which should be considered in the selection of guides. Another speaker reiterated this point, saying that visitors should meet as few closed doors as possible. One speaker noted in particular with satisfaction that the disarmament exhibit in the

first-floor corridor of the conference building, which had been inaccessible to visitors for some time, had recently been reinstated as part of the tour. His delegation attached particular attention to those exhibits, which included materials from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as an expression of the aspirations of people everywhere for nuclear disarmament and world peace. He thanked the Department of Public Information and the Department of Administration and Management for working out this arrangement, at the same time welcoming any additional measures that could help make United Nations tours a more informative and inspirational experience.

51. At the close of the general debate, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information expressed his appreciation for the kind words of support addressed to him personally and to his staff members. He emphasized that such progress could not have been achieved without the close collaboration and mutual confidence between the Department and the Committee.

IV. PREPARATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FIFTIETH SESSION

52. At the 7th meeting of the Committee, on 12 May 1995, the Rapporteur introduced the draft report of the Committee on its seventeenth session. Statements were made by the representatives of Belize, Benin, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Cuba, India, the Netherlands (on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States), the Philippines (on behalf of the Group of 77), Romania, the Russian Federation, and by Haiti as an observer. The Committee decided by consensus to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the report including the following draft resolutions, as orally amended.

Draft resolution A

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information, 4/

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process"

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

4/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/50/21).

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication 5/ of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its primary role in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the

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5/ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980, vol. I, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

Taking note of all the reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Information,

1. Welcomes Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakstan and South Africa, following the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic Government in that country, to membership in the Committee;

2. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

3. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, in order to put into practice the need for an effective public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the formation and day-to-day functioning of the information components of peace-keeping and other field operations of the United Nations, to ensure the involvement of the Department at the planning stage of such future operations through inter-departmental consultations and coordination with the other substantive departments of the Secretariat;

5. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information 6/ and urges all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its major publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations and Africa Recovery, maintaining consistent editorial independence and accuracy, taking the necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions wherever they occur;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to increase his efforts for the early resumption of the publication Development Forum, or an alternative system-wide publication that meets the requirements set out for new publications by the Committee;

7. Requests the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and to report to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session;

8. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, about United Nations activities;

6/ A/AC.198/1995/3.

9. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the trial of integrating United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme, 7/ and invites the Secretary-General to continue the integration exercise whenever feasible, on a case-by-case basis, while taking into account the views of the host country, and ensuring that the information functions and autonomy of the United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, and to report to the Committee on Information;

10. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of these centres;

11. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the allocation of resources to United Nations information centres in 1994 8/ and calls upon him to continue to study ways and means to rationalize and effect equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session;

12. Welcomes the action by some Member States with regard to financial and material support to United Nations information centres in their respective capitals;

13. Welcomes the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the establishment of a United Nations information component at Warsaw;

14. Notes the progress made by the Secretary-General and the German authorities towards establishing, within existing resources of the Department of Public Information, a United Nations information centre at Bonn;

15. Notes with appreciation the action taken, or being taken, by the Secretary-General regarding the reactivation and enhancement of the United Nations information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Tehran;

16. Welcomes the continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

17. Takes note of the requests of Bulgaria, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti and Slovakia for information centres or information components;

18. Expresses its full support for the wide and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through a continuation of United Nations press releases in both working languages of the Secretariat, namely, English and French, and welcomes the improvements in the quality and speedy issue of those press releases in both working languages;

19. Encourages the Secretary-General to explore ways and means to improve the access of United Nations radio to airwaves world wide, bearing in mind that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the

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7/ A/AC.198/1995/5.

8/ A/AC.198/1995/2.

Department of Public Information and is an important instrument in United Nations activities with regard to development and peace-keeping;

20. Notes with appreciation the efforts of the Department of Public Information to take advantage of recent developments in information technology in order to improve the dissemination of information on the United Nations, and encourages the Department to continue its efforts in this field;

21. Notes the important role the Department of Public Information will have to play in responding to the increased public interest resulting from the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, and requests the Department to ensure the greatest possible access for United Nations guided tours, as well as to ensure that displays in public areas are kept as informative, up to date and relevant as possible;

22. Invites Member States that wish to do so to submit to the Secretary-General by 15 March 1996 their observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities freely and independently, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session;

23. Recommends, in order to continue to facilitate contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, that the Bureau of the Committee together with representatives of each regional group, the Group of 77 and China, in close contact with the members of the Committee, should meet on a regular basis and consult at periodic intervals with representatives of the Department;

24. Takes note of the request of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine concerning information activities for the tenth anniversary in 1996 of the Chernobyl disaster and calls upon the Department of Public Information to continue cooperation with the countries concerned, and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, with a view to establishing and implementing such activities as appropriate, and within existing resources;

25. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session, in 1996, and to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, in 1996, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

26. Decides that the next session of the Committee on Information should last not more than ten working days, and invites the Bureau of the Committee to explore ways and means of making optimum use of the Committee's time;

27. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session;

28. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-first session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

53. Also at its 7th meeting, the Committee decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Draft decision

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89 members and to appoint the Democratic People's Republic of Korea a member of the Committee on Information.

ANNEX I

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the seventeenth session

I feel highly honoured over my election as Chairman of the Committee on Information for 1995 and 1996. I wish to express my thanks to the members of the Committee for placing their trust and confidence in me and bestowing this great distinction on my country. I shall make every endeavour to fulfil both the mandate of this Committee and your expectations. In doing so, I shall be guided by your wisdom in the course of our deliberations.

May I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Salman Abbassy of Pakistan, who was elected Chairman of the Committee at the last session, and Mr. Stanislaw Konik of Poland, who has directed in his capacity as Acting Chairman the work of the Committee for over a year. Mr. Konik cannot be with us today, and I would like, through the delegation of Poland, to convey our best wishes to him for a speedy recovery.

Both distinguished delegates deserve our recognition for their positive contributions to the atmosphere of cooperation that has helped maintain and broaden the consensus in this Committee, which deals with questions of utmost concern to Member States. I consider this to be a major achievement, and one for which we shall continue to work together with the management of the Department of Public Information, under the experienced leadership of the Honourable Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, our friend Mr. Samir Sanbar.

At this point I wish to assure you of my intention to continue on the same path and to promote teamwork further in order to provide the Department with the direction it requires to strengthen its role as focal point within the Secretariat for the implementation of its public information tasks.

I am delighted to extend my felicitations and a warm welcome to the delegations of Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakstan and South Africa, who are the newest members of our Committee. Their participation certainly further enhances the standing of the Committee on Information and broadens the diversity of its membership.

At this time of new tasks and major responsibilities for the United Nations, the importance of public information as a means of mobilizing support for the Organization cannot be overemphasized. People in all regions of the world see the United Nations as a repository of hope for humanity and the future. The work of the Department for Public Information over the last year has endeavoured to meet these expectations in a productive and efficient way. I would like to note that the Department has developed a public information strategy which, undoubtedly, has increased its outreach and at the same time ensured greater cost-efficiency.

The General Assembly in its resolution 49/38 B requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Committee several reports, which are now before us and which reflect the Department's new directions. The first, which is contained in document A/AC.198/1995/2, describes the increased outreach of the United Nations information centres, provides information about the cost-efficiency of their operation and summarizes the Department's measures to ensure an effective network of information centres. The second report, contained in document

A/AC.198/1995/3, gives a detailed account of the Department's publication activities and reviews its recurrent and non-recurrent publications, highlighting their purposes and their importance for reflecting the achievements of the Organization.

As distinguished delegations are aware, in paragraph 21 of its resolution 49/38 B, the General Assembly invited "Member States that wish to do so to submit to the Secretary-General ... their observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures in developing countries". In response to this invitation, only one communication was received. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations has submitted a number of suggestions inviting United Nations system organizations to assist developing countries in strengthening their basic communication infrastructures, particularly in the telecommunications sector, in providing training facilities and in developing an information exchange system both within and between developing countries.

The strength of the United Nations depends on its ability to communicate and to convince. I wish to ensure the management of the Department of Public Information of the Committee's continued commitment to provide the guidance and the means for the implementation of its successful work. I am looking forward to a constructive exchange of views in the course of these two short weeks before us. With your support and dedicated work, I am confident that we shall be able to progress even further in strengthening our consensus on matters pertaining to the important issues before us and produce concrete, workable and action-oriented recommendations.

ANNEX II

Statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information at the opening of the seventeenth session of the Committee on Information

I

It is indeed an honour and pleasure for me to be with you here as the Committee on Information undertakes its deliberations at this seventeenth session. May I first of all congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other distinguished members of the Bureau, on your election and, on behalf of my Department, extend best wishes to you for a very successful session. Also, I wish to express a warm welcome to the delegations of Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakstan and South Africa as they take their place among the members of the Committee. No doubt they will make an invaluable contribution to our work. Allow me to assure you, the Bureau and the Committee as a whole, that I and my staff will make every effort to assist you in your deliberations. Having worked with you closely in my present capacity for well over a year now, I am convinced that this session will provide further momentum to the work of the Department, or I should say your Department, in addressing the public information needs of the Organization at the threshold of its next 50 years.

This session coincides with World Press Freedom Day, which is commemorated on 3 May. We are committed to freedom of information as the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated. I would like, on behalf of my Department, to express gratitude to all media professionals around the world who risk their lives daily to transmit to us the important message of peace, democracy and development. In this connection, we cannot fail to recognize the important role of a pluralistic media in building democracy. The Department of Public Information continues to show its dedication to this cause through the series of regional seminars organized in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Following seminars held at Windhoek, Almaty and Santiago, we are planning the next seminar for Sana'a at the beginning of 1996. We in the United Nations system, and especially those of us who are dealing with media, must continue to work together at this session, and wherever the opportunity arises, to recommit ourselves to the fundamental human rights of freedom of thought and expression and freedom of the press in the service of humanity and its well-being.

Through a cycle of world conferences, the United Nations is laying the foundations of a new consensus dedicated to essential human development values. "In making social issues a universal priority", as the Secretary-General pointed out at the recently held World Summit for Social Development, "our intention is to take responsibility for the collective future of international society and to pledge ourselves anew to the ideal of global solidarity". Furthermore, as he stated at the Freedom Forum at Columbia University, "Events dominate our lives, trends of thought may be far more significant in shaping the future". Never has information been more crucial to an effective United Nations than it is today; never has our ability to disseminate information on the work and the achievements of the Organization been more important; never has the need to generate favourable public opinion for the United Nations been greater than it is today. The message of the United Nations must be brought home to every corner of the world. This is a very daunting task that can only be accomplished through a joint effort by all of us. Modern communications technologies offer us unprecedented opportunities. At the same time, they pose for us major

challenges. How can we best employ our limited resources to master these new technologies and communicate our message to vast new audiences?

It bears repetition here to say that international affairs have been transformed by the developments of recent years. The Organization's response was most succinctly conveyed to the international community by the Secretary-General in "An Agenda for Peace" and its Supplement and in "An Agenda for Development". Our information efforts are guided by the priorities underscored in them, or, to use the Secretary-General's words, they are "contributions to the contest of ideas about peace, development and democracy".

The Department of Public Information, over the last year and a half, has undertaken new initiatives and explored new approaches. In all of them, cost-effectiveness was the key. There is a mutual commitment and responsibility on the part of the Department and you, the Member States, in particular the members of the Committee on Information. And I am happy to state that they are bearing fruit. We continue our efforts in close cooperation with you. This is how we can really succeed. In this regard, the regular dialogue between the management of the Department and the Bureau of your Committee, together with the representatives of each of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, as well as many other delegations over the year, has been essential to our endeavours.

The concept of partnership is also fundamental to the Department's new approach within the Secretariat, which entails the sharing of responsibility, the strengthening of coordination in planning public information policies and programmes with substantive departments, offices and agencies, the pooling of resources for the implementation of information tasks and the recognition of public information as a decisive factor in United Nations initiatives both at Headquarters and in the field.

With a view to reaching the objective, often reiterated by the Secretary-General, for the United Nations system to "speak with one voice", the Department of Public Information has through the machinery of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) continued to promote stronger inter-agency cooperation and coordination in the field of public information. In addition to its regular annual session, during 1994 JUNIC held two ad hoc sessions to develop and coordinate the implementation of joint information activities in connection with the major international conferences scheduled for 1994 and 1995, and in particular with the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. As a result of these efforts, members of JUNIC made contributions to a wide range of joint activities designed to promote a variety of issues in the information buildup for these conferences.

It is in pursuit of this approach, that we have successfully built stronger partnerships with media worldwide. We have concentrated our information efforts on major issues before the international community in order to attract a wider range of key audiences. We have streamlined the management of our operating machinery, both at Headquarters and in the field, and most importantly, we have been able to motivate and mobilize the Department's main resource, its staff. I would add here my personal pride at the professional commitment displayed by the staff of the Department during the year. Perhaps because of my long association with them over the years, I have always considered the staff of the information centres working overseas as our family. Most of them I know personally. I was especially distressed, therefore, by the assassination in March of our Information Assistant in Algiers, Mr. Ouassini Lahrache. He consistently displayed all the qualities of a dedicated international civil servant, working

almost single-handedly at the information centre in difficult circumstances, while always retaining a pride in his country, Algeria. He is deeply missed. In every service and at every level, staff of the Department of Public Information have joined hands, working closely and tirelessly with me to meet the challenge. The Department has endeavoured to ensure a balanced geographical representation of its staff at all levels. Although the principle of an equitable geographical distribution of posts should be seen in a Secretariat-wide context, it is of particular importance in the field of public information. I am committed to do the utmost in securing a representation of competent and devoted staff members from all the regional groups of Member States in the Department.

In preparing for major conferences, the Department has implemented a focal point approach. Highly qualified information professionals have been assigned, at the initial planning stage of a conference, to implement in close cooperation with the substantive departments, conference secretariats, and other agencies and organizations a coherent information strategy presenting the image of a unified Organization. The World Summit for Social Development held at Copenhagen two months ago, was the largest gathering of world leaders ever held. Staff members of the Department of Public Information provided extensive coverage and services to the media. About 70 countries received daily television coverage, and daily radio reports in English, French and Spanish were sent to 49 broadcasting organizations in all regions. The team produced press releases in English and French of all meetings, and 91 press conferences and briefings were held, including a daily briefing by the Spokesperson. Media accreditation, ongoing media liaison, photo and document distribution including an electronic form were also among the activities. Three press kits, special broadcast and video programmes for the Summit and 24 "issue papers" highlighting substantive topics also contributed to the world-wide outreach during this important event.

In preparation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Department has produced a series of fact sheets, brochures, booklets, leaflets, pamphlets and feature articles, a conference poster and special radio and television programmes to promote the priority issues of the Conference. We have organized a number of media encounters in connection with the Conference and have distributed information packages to United Nations field offices and media world wide. In addition, the Department is working in close cooperation with United Nations agencies and with publishers and broadcasters for radio and television programmes, print publications, seminars and other events highlighting critical areas of concern of the Conference Platform for Action. Special press kits were prepared for the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in April 1995. These kits were widely appreciated for both content and presentation.

Another essential development is the work of a revitalized Publications Board. They provide guidance for publication activities on issues most relevant to the United Nations by ensuring better utilization of the wealth of information uniquely available to the Organization. Another responsibility the Board is entrusted with is to establish a more manageable publications programme by eliminating duplication and overlapping of print titles. Our declared goal is cost-effectiveness of work and increase of sales of United Nations publications.

In this context, and in addition to the information contained in the report by the Secretary-General on the Department's publications, I should like to take the opportunity to elaborate further on one of the Department's major

undertakings, that is the Blue Book series, which is an initiative to capitalize on the United Nations newly gained position at centre stage. Each volume of the series documents the central role and the vital legacy of the United Nations in a major international endeavour, emphasizing its achievements and successes, utilizing the treasure trove of unique information available to the Secretariat. Most importantly for policy makers, academicians, researchers and of course journalists, each edition includes in one volume all the principal documentation: relevant actions by the Security Council and the General Assembly, related historic documents and a detailed chronology. Each edition features an extensive introduction by the Secretary-General. The Blue Book series is aimed at documenting the most current issues of the United Nations agenda, highlighting their importance and relevance for future involvement of the Organization. In the short time they have been available, these books have begun to generate a growing interest among important target audiences. This series on United Nations success stories currently tops the list of the Department's sales items and is the subject of numerous reviews by specialized magazines in many parts of the world. And it has begun to generate income.

Keeping pace with the rapidly evolving technology in the field of telecommunications - which is essential in the extremely competitive field of information - continues to be a priority for the Department, despite budgetary constraints and increasing demands on its resources. From the day I took over as head of the Department, a priority has been to strengthen United Nations information programmes, to polish the tools of programme delivery, and to that end find innovative ways to assimilate technological advances in order to establish a far-reaching communications network for the United Nations. For a long time, the Department was held back by limited technological means and equipment at its disposal. Today, however, we are moving with an accelerated speed on the "information superhighway" using electronic networks such as Gemnet, APC, Togethernet and the Internet. The database of the Department of Public Information on the Internet is presently the largest within the United Nations family and is user-friendly and economically sound. United Nations publications and important documents, including reports of the Secretary-General, are reaching their audiences in electronic form at an enormous speed. Out of the total of 14,000 daily accesses, many emanate from permanent missions to the United Nations and United Nations offices world wide.

In a new move forward, the Department is now prepared to strengthen its existing presence in cyberspace by means of the World Wide Web, a service which integrates text, graphics and audio in multi-media presentations to Internet users. Going a step beyond highly successful gopher system of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Public Information is now working with the Electronic Services Division of the United Nations to build on the Web a United Nations "home page", to be launched as a pilot project on 26 June, in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary observances of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations at San Francisco. Moreover, through the Web "home page", the United Nations will be able to provide to Internet users graphically appealing elements and linked files on United Nations activities in multi-media format.

Through this service, the Department will not only be able to convey United Nations news and documents electronically, but also deliver the Department's collection of historical images recorded during the Organization's first 50 years and, in addition, present an on-line tour of Headquarters. Most recently, the World Wide Web was used with great success to transmit photographs electronically from the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen to media and to Headquarters. Regarding text transmissions during the Social

Summit, the Department has registered the retrieval of 8,585 information materials through the Web server, in addition to the more than 11,000 retrievals through the Gopher server. It should be stressed that this increased dissemination has no financial implications for the Department.

In yet another move to keep pace with the latest technological developments, the Department will make the time-consuming process of audio/visual editing as simple as word processing and will develop a future tapeless archival system that is fully networked and capable of almost instantaneous delivery of the Department's products world wide.

In December, for the first time, a video programme of the Department - the much in demand "Year in Review" - was transmitted via three major satellites reaching broadcasters around the world with a potential audience of over 360 million television households. This transmission proved to be successful not only in reaching large numbers of viewers in a high-quality and cost-effective manner, but also in ensuring timeliness of delivery. This pilot undertaking will be the subject of a presentation to you by the Media Division at the briefing session of the Committee.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is operating a series of on-line databases, known as the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) and consisting of bibliographic, factual, authority and textual data which are made available to Member States by direct on-line access, bibliographic utility, the Optical Disc System, and of course via the Internet. Since April 1995, UNBIS Plus on CD-ROM has been available, providing direct access through information centres, depository libraries and commercial users to all library files.

At this juncture, I should like to stress the importance of the United Nations depository library network totalling today 343 libraries in 138 countries and territories around the world. The efforts of our Dag Hammarskjöld Library in its help to these libraries are aimed at increasing their potential and role as effective disseminators of United Nations documents and publications. In the fiftieth year of the Organization, depository libraries play an essential role in promoting public awareness of the goals and activities of the United Nations. Major efforts were undertaken in 1994 to enhance this network of disseminators of information by making greater use of the Internet and optical disc technologies for bringing the wealth of United Nations information to these libraries, by designating additional depository libraries to the network and by increasing visits and training opportunities to enhance the performance of these libraries and make it commensurate with an increased interest of their audiences.

In its quest to forge strong partnerships with broadcasting media world wide, the Department has proved its capability to deliver swiftly audio-visual information products of the highest broadcast quality in accordance with standard technology. The Department has been able to reinforce its highly successful working relationships with international broadcasting organizations which receive daily feeds of United Nations television video packages highlights for redissemination around the world. With the assistance of international syndicators, United Nations audio-visual productions are on a regular basis reaching broadcasting organizations also in the southern hemisphere. Beginning with the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held at Yokohama in 1994, the Department began transmitting audio recordings of major news value through the Integrated System of Digital Network (ISDN) to the International Broadcast Centre. ISDN transmissions guarantee full broadcast quality of the audio feeds. Important addresses by the Secretary-General away from

Headquarters - at locations where ISDN capabilities exist - have also been delivered through the system to New York and to broadcasters world wide. In observance of the Organization's fiftieth anniversary, the Department has produced a series of video compilations focusing on historic moments in the life of the Organization and on key thematic areas such as peace-keeping, the plight of refugees, the environment, women's issues and noteworthy international law topics.

At its session in 1994, the Committee on Information encouraged the Secretary-General "to explore ways and means to improve the access of United Nations radio to airwaves world wide, bearing in mind that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information". Currently, 29 radio programmes in 15 languages are sent to broadcasters in over 180 countries; the Department's programmes in Portuguese and in Hindi are broadcast by 168 stations. I want to share this detail with you, because programmes in other than the official languages, in many cases, provide for the widest outreach to audiences. The Department is presently engaged in consultations with major European shortwave broadcasters to explore the possibility of acquiring regular airtime for a multilingual daily broadcast schedule for United Nations radio. In this regard, I would like to call upon Member States having powerful broadcasting facilities operating on their national territories to assist the Department in maintaining a radio broadcast schedule on the air for the United Nations.

The importance of broadcast radio communication for peace-keeping information programmes has been underlined by the Secretary-General in his Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace". He stressed the need for peace-keeping operations to develop "an effective capacity ... to enable them to explain their mandate to the population", and he concluded that "Radio is the most effective medium for this purpose".

In my statement to the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee in October 1994, I urged a partnership between the Department and other Secretariat departments concerned with peace-keeping, political and humanitarian affairs to consolidate public information activities in peace-keeping and humanitarian emergency situations. We are now exploring the development of an inter-departmental consultative mechanism for the coordination of information strategies in the field. I welcome the support informally expressed by several members of the Committee to this collaborative approach to public information strategies, including an effort for the development of a central broadcasting facility for the purposes of dissemination of information for peace-keeping and humanitarian emergency situations. The Department over the last year has strengthened considerably its input in the planning of public information components for peace-keeping missions right from the initial stages of mission planning through mission execution. In addition to such information support, the Department, in consultation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and other substantive offices, issues on a continuous basis a series of information materials relative to peace-keeping and peacemaking. This will continue. Our joint agreement is that more has to be done.

I cannot address this Committee without bringing to your attention the increasing importance of the United Nations information centres as a vital link of the Department, and the United Nations as a whole, to the world. The network of 68 information centres and services play, more than ever before, a front-line role in bringing United Nations information to local audiences. To that end, in 1994, United Nations information centres organized an extensive schedule of

special events with the cooperation of host country officials, media, universities, non-governmental organizations, foundations, associations, political and social institutions, business communities, academicians, parliamentarians, libraries and municipalities, as well as in partnership with United Nations agencies.

Their varied activities ranged from translation of the Department's information kits to keeping local audiences informed about the preparations for the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, and about the Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace" and "Agenda for Development". In many countries, radio and television programmes on issues of concern to the United Nations were co-produced with national broadcasting organizations. United Nations information centres organized seminars and meetings, round tables and lectures to help bring intergovernmental debates closer to the general public.

The Department is pursuing its efforts to ensure close cooperation between United Nations information centres and other United Nations offices in the field in order to present a unified image of the Organization, to enhance information activities on issues of regional concern, and - most of all - to ensure that information centres form an integral part of the Department's information strategy. We succeeded in effecting savings through relocation of some centres in high-cost countries, as well as through the integration of some centres with UNDP offices. The main objective in this regard is to ensure the most effective means for increased outreach in the field. The guidance of this Committee was taken fully into account, that is, a case-by-case approach in close consultation with the host countries has been adopted. We seek at all times to ensure that the information functions of the United Nations information centres are enhanced continuously.

Taking into account the guidance by delegations at the 1994 session of this Committee, and following the decision of the General Assembly in resolution 48/258 of 23 June 1994, some funds and resources previously allocated to the anti-apartheid information programme have been surrendered. In full compliance with the principles of cost-efficiency, I have proposed redeployment of some of these resources to enhance public information activities relevant to southern Africa, including the establishment of an information office, headed by a Professional staff member of the Department, within the United Nations Office in South Africa. As recommended by this Committee, we also intend to strengthen the production and delivery capacity of the African radio unit.

In its efforts to reach a wider global audience, the Department has increased its partnerships with educational institutions both through Headquarters and its offices in the field. Consultations as well as survey results on teaching about the United Nations have confirmed my conviction that we need to establish guidelines for education about the Organization and its goals and activities. Currently, we are in the process of defining a strategy that will allow us to work in the closest possible way with educators from all regions and will have an impact on school curriculae. The fiftieth anniversary and the wide range of activities in the educational community in this regard provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen the Department's cooperation with educational institutions.

I wanted to share with you this morning some strategies and activities of the Department of Public Information fundamental to its new direction. In the interest of time, I have focused on matters of public information policies and their implementation as directed by the Secretary-General. Part II of my

statement gives a detailed account of how the Department has fulfilled specific mandates of the General Assembly called for at its forty-ninth session, and as recommended by this Committee.

Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to state that the Department now has the ability to reach its various audiences more quickly and more comprehensively. Moreover, having regained its professional credibility, the Department is now more able to communicate together with its partners in a more cost-effective manner the universal message of the United Nations.

In the discharge of its mandate, this Committee, with the experience and expertise represented in all of you, is in a unique position to play its role in guiding the Department of Public Information in the conduct of its work. Our success is your success, and our achievements begin with you. For they will have their foundation in your guidance, support and cooperation and will be built through the creative efforts of a dedicated staff of the Department throughout the world. "The acts of the United Nations", as the Secretary-General has underscored in his annual report on the work of the Organization, "must carry the authority of the peoples of the world, acting in concert through the Member States of the Organization". Public information has an essential role to play in contributing to this goal. To this we are all deeply committed.

II

In paragraph 24 of its resolution 49/38 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to report to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session ... on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution".

The Department of Public Information, as the communications arm of the United Nations, has continued to establish the strongest possible links with diverse media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. In its endeavour to promote an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations, the Department makes every effort to work side-by-side with other departments, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, first to formulate the information priorities of the Organization and then to project a unified message. With the increased role of the Organization in the management of a diverse array of global problems, the Department's materials and activities are designed to forge a clear image for the United Nations in all its dimensions. Its information programmes carefully blend the use of television, radio and print products to maximize access to the intended target audiences.

For journalists covering the United Nations, the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General is a principal point of contact for authoritative information on the work of the Organization and especially that of the Secretary-General. The Spokesman receives daily guidance from the Secretary-General and his senior staff. Each day at noon the Spokesman briefs accredited correspondents and then gives a briefing for press officers of the missions. These briefings focus on the statements and activities of the Secretary-General, but they also inform correspondents on the work of the Security Council, as well as on other developments in the United Nations system. He is assisted in these briefings by an Associate Spokesman who covers specific matters relating to peace-keeping operations. The scope of the noon briefings, which are frequently supplemented by additional briefings for correspondents, reflects clearly the increasing responsibilities of the Organization.

The Office is also responsible for planning the Secretary-General's media-related activities, setting up his press conferences and handling requests from journalists for interviews with him and senior officials, as well as planning media aspects of official travel to Member States and international conferences. The Spokesman's staff assists in the preparation of background information on issues raised at the noon briefing and responds to follow-up inquiries from correspondents. Also, the Department keeps the Secretary-General and senior officials promptly and fully apprised of coverage in the international print media and provides press analysis about the United Nations and its organs, as well as relevant issues before the Organization.

Radio professionals in the Department coordinated with Headquarters offices, United Nations field offices and national broadcasting organizations to ensure that news reports covering the activities of the Secretary-General during his travels to over 30 countries in the past year were fed electronically to Headquarters for world-wide dissemination. Such coverage, with sound actuality from the field, has become a staple item in radio programming. In addition, the Secretary-General's 1994 United Nations Day message was packaged and transmitted on line in three languages to over 80 radio stations and networks world wide prior to the occasion.

A very useful tool in disseminating information about the work of the United Nations in a cost-effective manner is the Department's United Nations News Electronic Bulletin Board, which has moved from its experimental phase into a fully operational, 24-hour-a-day service, providing consolidated and updated news about the United Nations in three languages by means of a simple telephone call. At any given time, some three hours of audio information material for use by broadcasters is available on approximately 30 different items.

To capitalize on the wide public interest in the Organization in its fiftieth year, the Department is producing a series of 60-second public service television announcements about the history and achievements of the United Nations, entitled "UN Minutes". These informational spots use historical and current footage from the Department's extensive film and video library. They are being aired by Cable News Network (CNN) on both its international and domestic channels and have been sent to selected information centres. Language versions are being planned and broadcasters from various regions have expressed interest.

Similarly, the Department has begun production of an ongoing series of 30-second questions and answers about the United Nations. Entitled "UN Facts", these public service announcements are intended for distribution to cable television broadcasters. Language versions are also being planned. In addition, a 20-minute video about the United Nations was produced for schoolchildren to explain the purposes and work of the Organization.

Three special radio documentaries are being produced in 1995 in connection with the fiftieth anniversary, which deal respectively with the history of United Nations peace-keeping, the concerns and priorities of the world's youth at the threshold of the twenty-first century and key events in United Nations history.

The Department produced a supporting exhibit to accompany the display of the Charter of the United Nations in the Public Lobby in January 1995, highlighting the signing of the Charter in 1945, the signatures of the founding fathers and the current membership of 185 States.

The Department has given priority to preparations for the cycle of major United Nations conferences in 1994 and 1995 dedicated to economic and social issues. During the World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations News Electronic Bulletin Board carried over three hours of audio materials sent directly from Copenhagen, including the spokesperson's daily briefing at the Conference site, and news reports in French, English and Spanish. Some 4,700 copies of the Department's press kit on the Summit were distributed in English, French and Spanish to media and non-governmental organizations, as well as to delegations at the Conference site. Over 20,000 copies of the Department's poster for the Summit were disseminated in all official languages. The Department has already distributed an advance copy of the final Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action to all United Nations information centres and, on request, to the media. The final text will be reproduced in booklet form for widespread distribution, in all official languages.

Recent radio documentaries produced on economic and social issues were: "Water, Our Precious Resource", an eight-part series commissioned by the JUNIC for the observance of the World Day for Water to focus attention on issues related to the use and abuse of water resources; "Population and Development", a six-part series on key issues relevant to the International Conference on Population and Development; "Family: Resources and Responsibilities", a series of four programmes on the roles and responsibilities of families in a world in transition; and "Social Development", a five-part series on issues of poverty, social disintegration, unemployment and vulnerable social groups, produced as a curtain-raiser for the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Also, a five-part series on desertification is being produced, as is a four-part special documentary on the Law of the Sea. The Department is at present collecting materials for the November release of a four-part series on the world's indigenous peoples.

As a result of advance arrangements, multilingual coverage of all the major international conferences, as well as news coverage reports in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, was provided on a daily basis to regional radio broadcasting organizations, which retransmitted it in their regions. For the World Summit for Social Development, a number of video productions were prepared by the Department, including a documentary video covering the core issues of the World Summit for Social Development, which was distributed to United Nations information centres in four languages in advance of the Summit, four "UN in Action"/"CNN World Report" items on Summit issues, and a public service announcement in the six official languages.

An agreement with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has recently been concluded, under which the Department will produce a radio series in English, French and Spanish over a period of 18 months, which will focus on population and development issues as a follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development.

In its efforts to promote greater awareness of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held at Beijing, the Department has targeted communities and non-governmental organizations at the grass-roots level, educational and cultural institutions and intergovernmental and parliamentary bodies. It has developed a specialized mailing list of well over 1,200 media organizations and non-governmental organizations for periodic mailing of information materials and conference documents. These include a series of fact sheets, brochures, booklets, leaflets and feature articles, and a conference poster in the six official languages. The Department has also strengthened its ties with the host country for the Conference through the placement in Beijing of a departmental

focal point for the Conference and through meetings at Headquarters and in Beijing with government authorities responsible for the Conference. In negotiations with Chinese technical and media teams, which visited Headquarters in April 1995, broad agreements have been reached on media arrangements for the Conference. In executing its information programme, the Department is working in close association with the Conference secretariat and the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system.

The Department has launched a multi-media information programme for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held at Istanbul in June 1996. Production has begun on the print materials, such as the brochure and an information kit, as well as on the planning of radio and television programming. Staff of the Department participated in the first planing mission to Istanbul in April, as well as the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, held at Nairobi.

In support of the International Conference on Families, which was held in October 1994 during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly to discuss issues raised during the International Year of the Family, the Department organized a press conference with the Coordinator for the Year, provided press release coverage of the special conference and distributed public information materials to the press, to non-governmental organizations and delegates. Previously, in July, the Department had organized an exhibit on families in the General Assembly Public Lobby and produced a television public service announcement for the Year, which was aired on many networks, including CNN.

To assist in launching the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People in December 1994, the Department produced and distributed a backgrounder on the decade in English, French and Spanish. A newsletter was also prepared and distributed in these languages prior to the launch, and work continues on a variety of projects to raise awareness of the Decade and its objectives.

The Department's multi-media information campaign in support of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, being held at Cairo from 29 April to 8 May, has included backgrounders and an information kit, "UN in Action" television items, local language materials prepared by information centres and services, an extensive presentation to over 100 non-governmental organization representatives, and press, television and photographic coverage of the Congress itself.

Media and public interest has continued to focus unabated on the priority areas of United Nations peace-keeping and peacemaking. Accordingly, over the past year, the Department has strengthened its activities to promote knowledge and understanding of the Organization's role and objectives in these important areas of activity. In consultation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and other substantive offices of the Secretariat, the Department of Public Information issues on a continuous basis a series of information materials related to peace-keeping and peacemaking.

The in-depth publication, United Nations Peace-keeping: Information Notes, providing an update of comprehensive information relevant to each mission, including background, Security Council mandates, composition and financing, continues to appear twice yearly. In response to the great demand for language versions, the publication will be released in French and Spanish. The Department has also continued to issue its quarterly background note on peace-keeping operations, with the July 1994 edition in the six official languages.

The Department issued during the past year updated editions of reference papers on the role of the Organization in Somalia, Angola, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. A poster pictorially illustrating United Nations peace-keeping was released in February 1995. As mandated by the General Assembly, work is in progress for issuance later in the year of the third edition of the comprehensive publication Blue Helmets.

In the field of disarmament, the Department, in cooperation with the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, has produced and distributed a press kit on the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of Parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which began in April at Headquarters, as well as a fold-over pamphlet on the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Many video items produced in the "UN in Action" series and subsequently aired on "CNN World Report" have been devoted to current peace-keeping operations, as well as election and humanitarian assistance relating to Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Guatemala, Bosnia, Georgia and Chechnya. A special line of radio programme production on peace-keeping has been introduced by the Department, which includes interviews, news segments, updates and special subjects. This production activity is feeding material into the Bulletin Board and regional magazines. Consideration is being given to instituting a regular programme segment, independently or as part of existing magazines, on the priority theme of peace-keeping.

The Department's cartographers have prepared new or updated revisions of maps for [illegible] missions, including for new deployments of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission III (UNAVEM III), the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). These maps were included in the reports of the Secretary-General, as well in documents such as financial reports of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and reference papers of the Department of Public Information. Copies were also provided to the news media upon request. A number of these maps were also prepared for use in the Blue Book series. A number of new profile maps have been prepared for countries around the world, including Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti and El Salvador in Central America; Ecuador and Peru in South America; Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel in the Middle East; and Liberia, Rwanda and Zaire in Africa. These maps are also used widely within the United Nations system, for example as sources for many publications issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and UNFPA. They are also made available to outside publishers with the approval of the Publications Board. In mid-1994, the Department acquired a large-format colour plotter which now allows for the preparation of large coloured maps of the various field operations, which are used for briefing purposes for the Situation Room, as well as by other offices of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and by the Spokesman's Office.

It should be noted that the Department, for the first time, has issued an annual roundup of Security Council resolutions and Council presidential statements in English and French, which is complementary to its long-established and widely used roundup of General Assembly resolutions and decisions.

The Department continues to provide information support for the work of the United Nations in the area of sustainable development. A comprehensive press kit was produced for the session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

held in April 1995. To meet the steady demand, an additional 10,000 copies of the book version of Agenda 21 were reprinted, as were the texts of the legal agreements signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

As part of its special information programme on the question of Palestine, the Department organized at Madrid from 29 to 31 March 1995 a meeting on assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development. The seminar, which was hosted by the Government of Spain, brought together Palestinian media professionals and policy makers with media experts, foundations and donor agencies, principally from Europe and the United States of America. It examined ways and means to promote Palestinian media and provided an opportunity to discuss the needs of Palestinian media professionals in such areas as media and the democratic process, legal aspects of communication, media ownership and editorial freedom, financing and management, application of new communications technologies and training of media professionals. As a result, a series of recommendations and projects in these areas have been proposed. In addition to that provided by the Government of Spain and UNESCO, financial assistance for the organization of the seminar was also provided by the Government of the Netherlands and by UNDP.

Within the framework of the same programme, the Department has also begun preparation of the 1995 International Encounter for Journalists on the Question of Palestine, which will be held at Prague from 13 to 15 June and will be co-sponsored by the Government of the Czech Republic.

In a continuing effort to strengthen its production and programme delivery targeted to the African region, especially southern Africa, the African radio unit has recently been reinforced with the addition of a number of experienced staff from the former anti-apartheid unit.

The Department of Public Information, through its Dag Hammarskjöld Library, continues to expand its outreach by making available to the world community the enormous information potential of the Organization. It produces a series of on-line databases, collectively known as the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS), consisting of 10 files containing bibliographic, factual, authority and textual data related to United Nations documents and/or activities. This information is made available by the following means: (a) direct on-line access through the New York Computing Service to permanent missions and government agencies; (b) access via a bibliographic utility to major universities and other research institutions in many countries throughout the world; (c) UNBIS Plus on CD-ROM, developed in collaboration with a commercial vendor, which provides access to all UNBIS files, making extensive use of hypertext linkages between files, and is presented with a user-friendly interface, and will be marketed in developing countries at concessional prices and provided free of charge to United Nations information centres for consultation by the general public; (d) access through the Optical Disc System for indexing data with respect to parliamentary documents and administrative issuances; (e) access via the Internet; (f) access on diskette; and (g) print products.

The publications of the Department have been extensively detailed in a report by the Secretary-General currently before the Committee. It must be reiterated, however, that given the wide and long-term impact of publications on public perception of the United Nations, the Department is taking steps to ensure that its printed products are original, worthwhile and of the highest quality. It is the aim of these publications to reflect the important role the

Organization is currently playing in the critical international endeavours of our time. As a test of their increased relevance, more of the Department's publications are now being offered for sale. The External Publications Office of the Department continues to seek the widest possible dissemination and exposure of United Nations publications through negotiations with commercial publishers interested in obtaining publishing and reprinting rights in many languages.

The drive further to enhance publications is facilitated by the deployment of new technologies which make possible the creation of attractive designs in a speedy and cost-effective manner and the effective pooling of editorial resources. The Department's Design Section, which has been converted to a full-service desk-top publishing office, is providing design, typography and technical print production services for the print materials of the Department, as well as for many other offices within the United Nations system.

In another move to keep pace with the latest technological developments, the storage, retrieval, reproduction and dissemination of the Department's photographs will be significantly simplified through the introduction of the Eastman Kodak Professional CD system. This will operate concurrently with the existing chemical photo processing system, which will ultimately be phased out.

Among their many and varied activities, United Nations information centres continued to play a pivotal role in promoting the Organization's major conferences on development questions during 1994 by raising the level of local interest in the issues and keeping the media and public informed. The centres organized briefings, seminars, round tables and television and radio discussion programmes featuring United Nations experts. They also translated, adapted and repackaged documents, backgrounders and other information materials into 37 local languages. At La Paz and Windhoek, the centres created issue-specific journalists' networks on women and population questions in order to generate an increase in in-depth coverage.

The efforts of United Nations information centres facilitated immediate access to regional responses to United Nations activities, in particular to two recent United Nations conferences. During the World Summit for Social Development, information centres faxed more than 2,000 daily clippings, press reports, media analyses and translations of major editorials from print, radio and television to the Department's team at the conference. Immediate feedback was also provided by information centres during and after the International Conference on Population and Development. Approximately 7,500 articles from 432 newspapers provided by information centres indicated the most extensive media coverage ever achieved for United Nations conferences. At the same time information centres relayed press releases and other materials by e-mail and fax and responded to thousands of queries from the media, non-governmental organizations and the public. A special role was played by information centres located in the conference host countries, which not only facilitated access to local media for Conference officials, but also often provided translation and interpretation liaison services as well. A number of centres have undertaken, and continue to undertake, follow-up briefings on the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development for media and non-governmental organizations and intend to conduct briefings in connection with preparations for the Beijing women's conference and for Habitat II in 1996.

United Nations information centres were instrumental in establishing over 70 Fiftieth Anniversary National Committees. In keeping with the objectives of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the centres devoted themselves

to promoting the observance, especially by the young, through teachers and specialists in curriculum development. To publicize the overall work of the United Nations information centres such as those at Bucharest, New Delhi, Rome and Tehran created special partnerships for the publication of United Nations information materials. The Bucharest centre, in cooperation with the Romanian League on Human Rights, published 5,000 local language copies of the ABC-Teaching Human Rights: Practical Activities for Primary and Secondary Schools, as well as excerpts from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. By a special arrangement with the centre in Rome, the Italian news agency Agenzia Nationale Stampa Associata (ANSA) published papers on the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and the fiftieth anniversary and distributed them to its subscriber base as well as to parliamentarians, academics and editors of specialized journals. The centre at New Delhi established close relations with leading academics and private sector organizations to facilitate the publishing and dissemination of United Nations documents and information materials in vernacular languages, and the centre at Tehran translated "An Agenda for Development" into Farsi and published the report in seven parts in cooperation with the Persian morning daily, Abrar.

Statements by the Secretary-General, as well as booklets, fact sheets and backgrounders related to the Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women have been produced in Bahasa Indonesian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Kiswahili, Nepali, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Shona, Swedish and Thai. Major publications such as the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights have been made available by information centres with the assistance of national partners, in additional languages, including Czech, German, Greek, Japanese and Portuguese. In this connection, currently a Portuguese version of the second edition of the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace", with the new supplement and related United Nations documents, as well as his "Agenda for Development", are being produced for distribution in the Portuguese-speaking countries.

Non-governmental organizations have been key players in the United Nations community from the beginning, when 42 of them served as consultants during the United Nations Conference on International Organization, which produced the Charter. The past few years have witnessed an unprecedented growth in the number of non-governmental organizations involved in the work of the United Nations, and they have had a tremendous influence in helping to bring a number of important United Nations issues to the forefront of the international agenda.

In its original mandate of January 1946, the Department was urged actively to assist and encourage non-governmental organizations, and it has continued to reach out to this community. In 1968, at United Nations Headquarters, 204 organizations were listed with the NGO Section of the Office of Public Information. Between 1990 and 1994, 244 new associates were added, bringing the total of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Department of Public Information to 1,327.

It should also be pointed out that with each major United Nations conference which has mobilized public interest in issues of global concern, a growing number of national and international non-governmental organizations have joined in the discussion and promotion of these issues. For example, 1,420 non-governmental organizations were registered for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and for the World

Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen over 2,400 non-governmental organizations were accredited.

To help promote cooperation between the United Nations and the non-governmental organization community, the Department published in 1994 an expanded annual directory of the 1,327 non-governmental organizations associated with it, which includes two annexes categorizing these organizations by country and field of activity. The 1995 version will be available in May. In addition, in order to facilitate its dialogue with its wide non-governmental organization constituency, the Department has recently initiated a weekly bulletin, DPI/NGO Link. An average of 120 representatives of non-governmental organizations attend weekly briefings on a wide range of current United Nations activities and issues, featuring speakers from offices throughout the United Nations system and delegations.

The guided tours operation at Headquarters faced serious difficulties throughout 1994 as a result of a variety of restrictions imposed for security reasons. With a curtailed tour route, which did not include the Security Council Chamber, the number of people taking the tour declined. However, at the end of the year, an agreement was reached between the Department of Public Information and the Office of Conference and Support Services to regain access to the Security Council Chamber as well as the disarmament exhibit. Visitors have responded positively and the results have been clearly tangible, since as of 15 March 1995 the number of people taking the guided tour was up by 27 per cent compared with 1994 figures.

However, the problem remains that visitors are disappointed by not being granted access to the Security Council Chamber when the Council is in session, and this is a matter which the Department continues to pursue. In addition, the tour operation is restricted by a designated group size of 15 people per tour guide, which limits the efficient use of guiding staff and will contribute to a projected deficit of well over $1 million for the current biennium.

Staff members with a talent for public speaking were utilized by the Department for group programmes, and 410 briefings on United Nations topics were arranged for groups at Headquarters from May 1994 to March 1995 for an audience of 38,000 people. Also there were 37 speaking engagements arranged away from Headquarters to a total audience of 10,650 people. The subjects most frequently requested by groups dealt with peace and security and United Nations peace-keeping, but there was an increased number of briefings which dealt with social development, particularly with women. Intense public interest in the Organization has also resulted in a total of 42,000 inquiries being processed on the whole spectrum of United Nations activities, especially on peace-keeping, peacemaking and social development. Interest in the fiftieth anniversary has also been high.

In general, staff of the Department of Public Information have found that the nature of the public's questions have become more complex, with answers requiring considerable research and liaison with substantive departments. The Department has planned a special publication, a poster/pamphlet entitled "The Charter at Your Fingertips", a guide to the Charter in question-and-answer format, for release in 1995. Also, Model United Nations participants are approaching the Department in increasing numbers for information kits.

The Department has continued to co-sponsor with United Nations agency partners a series of events related to special observances, such as International Literacy Day, Human Rights Day and International Women's Day The

Department is currently organizing a special event in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and others for World Environment Day on 5 June, which will have as its special focus "women and the environment".

The Department produced an exhibit, "A New Agenda for Human Development", in collaboration with a number of agencies and programmes in the United Nations system in 1994, which won an award for excellence from the Industrial Designers' Association in March 1995. The exhibit was designed to highlight the interwoven issues before the United Nations conferences on population and development, social development and women. The structure of the exhibit is a double helix, invoking the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and acting as a metaphor for the yet to be discovered economic and social solutions that will make possible the implementation of a new agenda for human development. The exhibit will travel to Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women in September.

JUNIC held its twentieth session at Montreal in July 1994, under the chairmanship of the Director of Information of UNICEF. The Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information and the information directors of 27 United Nations organizations attended the session. The report of the session was presented to the Administrative Committee on Coordination and approved.

JUNIC members held extensive discussions on a system-wide publication on development issues that could replace Development Forum, which ceased publication at the end of 1992 owing to a lack of sufficient funding both from the regular budget and from extrabudgetary sources. Several members of the Committee supported a proposal to contract a London-based news service to research and write, for a yearly fee, at least one article per week on issues flagged by the members of JUNIC. It was suggested that the quarterly output of articles could be consolidated in a single publication for wider dissemination.

In the view of the Department of Public Information, this proposal does not provide a viable alternative to a system-wide publication, nor does it meet the requirements of the mandate entrusted to the Department by the General Assembly through the Committee on Information. Rather, the Department suggested looking into the possibility of expanding its bi-monthly publication, Development Update, into a new system-wide publication. JUNIC encouraged the Department to develop this proposal for a new publication on development issues in 1996, but also decided to negotiate a one-year contract with the news service, enabling those members of the Committee who wished to do so to participate in the cost-sharing.

Consultations were also held both at the regular and at two ad hoc sessions of JUNIC in February and November 1994, on the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the World Summit for Social Development. The development and implementation of an information programme for the upcoming Fourth World Conference on Women was also discussed at the regular session and at the two ad hoc sessions, resulting in agreement on a wide range of joint activities. JUNIC also approved, and ACC later endorsed, an addendum to the 1992 guidelines for participation of the United Nations system in international exhibits, which provide, among other things, guidance on practical matters relevant to these exhibitions.

JUNIC explored ways and means of working more effectively with the medium of television, exchanged views on the use of commercial advertising in publications issued by United Nations agencies and related organizations, considered alternative sources of financing for JUNIC activities, and discussed holding an inter-agency colloquium on strategies for more effectively

communicating global development issues. The members of JUNIC discussed several issues pertaining to the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, which is important to the United Nation system at a time when efforts are increasing to develop outreach to the non-governmental organization community. JUNIC held its annual workshop for directors of information of bilateral development agencies and members of JUNIC at Copenhagen in November 1994. The workshop was organized by UNDP and UNICEF, in cooperation with the Danish International Development Agency.

The twenty-first session of JUNIC was scheduled to take place in July 1995 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The agenda included, among other items, discussion on system-wide information programmes for the Fourth World Conference on Women and Habitat II, a review of the JUNIC Information Exchange Network and follow-up activities to the World Social Summit.

The Department has continued to provide its full support for UNESCO and its International Programme for the Development of Communication. In cooperation with UNESCO, the Department of Public Information has begun preparations for a seminar on independent and pluralistic Arab media, which will be held in Sana'a, at the invitation of the Government of Yemen, in December 1995 or January 1996. As in the case of the successful regional seminars held previously at Windhoek in 1991, Almaty in 1992 and Santiago in 1994, this seminar will provide an opportunity to evaluate the needs and concerns of media practitioners of the region and to propose a series of recommendations and concrete projects.

A draft backgrounder on the International Year for Tolerance (1995) has been prepared by the Department and distributed to information centres and field offices. The Department has responded to numerous inquiries regarding the Year and publicized the joint launching of the Year by the Secretary-General and UNESCO's Director-General.

ANNEX III

Paper on media strategies for peace-keeping and other field operations

A widespread perception has developed in United Nations circles concurrently with the dramatic growth in the number of peace-keeping and other field operations in recent years: that the Department of Public Information is responsible for the formation and day-to-day functioning of the information components of such missions. This perception is far from reality.

While the Department disseminates information on peace-keeping operations, in all other respects the professional expertise and existing infrastructure that already exist in the Department remain largely untapped, and the Department's involvement in conceptualizing, planning, implementing and coordinating the information programmes of field operations has so far been minimal. Nor have the Department's expertise and experience been used in all cases to identify staff, both internal and external, for rapid deployment to field missions. If they were, accountability could be ensured, thereby eliminating waste associated with the recruitment of transient officers. Thus, the Department's role as the focal point and coordinating mechanism for public information activities in the Secretariat - long recognized by the General Assembly - has not been activated with regard to peace-keeping. In the last year, however, the heads of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Public Information have developed closer links in the approach to questions relating to public information activities associated with peace-keeping missions.

The growing expectation that the United Nations information activities should help foster better understanding of the purposes of peace-keeping and peacemaking, correct misperceptions, counter hostile propaganda and create a favourable environment for the smooth operation of a mission has created new challenges in the area of public information. It has also given public information programmes an essential role and responsibility in ensuring the success of peace-keeping and other field missions; hence the need for a coordinated and unified public information strategy aimed at increasing public understanding and support for the peacemaking role of the United Nations. In his supplement to "An Agenda for Peace", the Secretary-General underlined the vital role played by an effective information capacity and the importance of establishing such a capacity at the early planning stages of each and every field mission.

The Department of Public Information disseminates information on peace-keeping through the network of United Nations information centres and services located in 68 countries. Currently, a wide range of information material is prepared and produced at Headquarters for dissemination. The Department's audio-visual services also regularly produce and disseminate information on peace-keeping via its broadcast transcriptions, the Electronic Bulletin Board, and videos and films.

The following measures are suggested:

(a) It is necessary that interdepartmental consultations and coordination between the Department of Public Information, which acts as focal point for public information activities within the Secretariat, and the substantive departments - the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, the Department of

Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs - are undertaken at the very earliest stages of planning for any field mission. This would enable the Secretariat to coordinate its efforts in the field of information. It would bring together the substantive input, i.e., the message, which is the responsibility of the Departments of Peace-keeping Operations, Political Affairs and Humanitarian Affairs, with the means for dissemination, i.e., the medium, which is the responsibility of the Department of Public Information;

(b) Early involvement of the Department of Public Information would ensure cost-efficiency and avoid fragmentation of resources and activities in the field of public information, as well as duplication of efforts. Moreover, the implementation of the observation by the Secretary-General in his report on effective planning, budgeting and administration of peace-keeping operations (A/48/945) that "when public information activities are specific to a particular operation ... [the costs involved] will ... be covered from the individual peace-keeping budget account" requires the participation of the Department;

(c) As soon as signals are received indicating that an emergency situation requiring United Nations intervention may arise, consultations should begin on the expected public information requirements and the development of an information strategy. Such consultations should take place within a standing inter-departmental working group on information strategies, comprising representatives from the Departments of Peace-keeping Operations, Political Affairs and Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Public Information, which would meet as required;

(d) Coordination between the departments would also allow the preparation by the Department of Public Information of rosters of personnel required to carry out the various functions associated with the public information activities of a peace-keeping or other field mission. This would save time and allow for the rapid establishment of an information component at the very start of a mission. These rosters should draw on personnel from the Secretariat, the media and delegations of Member States that possess the relevant media and political experience. This would enable mission recruitment to take place in an organized manner and would ensure greater accountability and responsibility of such personnel;

(e) In order to facilitate the Organization's response to the demand for mission-related information, a set of draft standards should be developed by the Department of Public Information. These draft standards should serve as a tool for the planning of mission information strategies and related Headquarters activities. Emphasis should be placed on the most cost-effective minimum information requirements, in recognition of the budgetary constraints common to all peace-keeping missions. The draft standards should identify a basic information programme, as well as additional supplementary activities that could be carried out according to the mission's mandates and requirements. A fragmentary, ad hoc and late-hour conception and implementation of peace-keeping information programmes has led to diminished impact, an incoherent message and costly information activities purporting to serve peace-keeping operations;

(f) The goal of an integrated information programme should be to enhance the effectiveness of the mission, both in the area of the mission and internationally, by fostering a better understanding of the United Nations mandate. It should, therefore, consist of two parts: an internal programme within the area of the mission, and an external programme for the international community at large, particularly troop-contributing and donor countries.

Parameters for each part should be detailed in the programme design, programme outputs, expected functions, personnel requirements and equipment and supplies.

An integrated information strategy would target public opinion in countries providing support to peace-keeping operations as well as those hosting peace-keeping missions. Such an approach would help build a solid consensus in support of peace-keeping missions among contributing countries and establish a positive environment for those missions in the countries of deployment. Moreover, this approach would help avoid duplication and fragmentation of public information programmes, disseminate a consistent message on peace-keeping and achieve cost-effectiveness.